



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# News Release

*Pacific Islands External Affairs Office*

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## **SERVICE SEEKS PROPOSALS FROM STATES FOR 2006 ENDANGERED SPECIES GRANTS**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is now seeking proposals from states and U.S. territories interested in acquiring land or planning for endangered species conservation. Through the fiscal year 2006 appropriation from Congress, more than \$70 million is available in the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund for conservation planning activities and habitat acquisition for federally protected species. Proposals must be submitted to Service Regional Offices by March 20, 2006.

“Our ability to successfully conserve threatened and endangered species ultimately depends on working cooperatively with our partners,” said Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton. “These grants will provide the means for States to work with private landowners, communities and tribes to protect vital endangered species habitat.”

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, and provides grants to states and territories to support their participation in a wide array of voluntary conservation projects for listed species, as well as for species that are either proposed or candidates for listing.

“Providing grants to our state partners is one of the most important tools we have to conserve imperiled species,” said Service Director Dale Hall. “We are proud to support state efforts to build long-term conservation partnerships and foster voluntary stewardship efforts nationwide.”

The Service is seeking proposals for the following three Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund categories:

**Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories to support the development of Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), through the support of baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach, and similar planning activities.

**HCP Land Acquisition Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories to acquire land associated with approved HCPs. Grants do not fund the mitigation required of an HCP permittee; instead, they support acquisitions by the State or local governments that complement actions associated with the HCP.

**Recovery Land Acquisition Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories for acquisition of threatened and endangered species habitat in support of approved recovery plans. Acquiring habitat to secure long term protection is often an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species.

Past local examples from the program include:

- A \$1,634,364 Land Acquisition grant was awarded for the acquisition of 3,714 acres of Moanalua Valley conservation lands currently owned by Damon Estate that are for sale on the open market. Located on the leeward side of the central Koolau Range, Moanalua Valley provides habitat for several endangered and rare forest bird species, and was the site of the last observations of the Oahu creeper and 'i'iwi. In addition, at least 11 endangered plant species, 3 rare plant species, and two endangered Oahu tree snail species are found in the area. The last known sighting of the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat was also in this valley. The lands will be added to existing State-owned conservation lands (the Honolulu Watershed Forest Reserve) for the purposes of endangered species conservation and management. This grant is the largest awarded under the program this year.
- A total of \$875,000 was provided to DLNR to acquire a 1,336-acre parcel on the windward side of Mauna Loa owned by the Carlsmith Trust. This native wet forest is relatively pristine and probably supports the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat, 'i'o, and several rare Hawaiian forest birds. Unlike the majority of lowland wet forests in the area, few alien plants have invaded the parcel. Once acquired, the parcel will be added to the existing Waiakea Forest Reserve.
- A one-acre parcel located near the center of the Manuka Natural Area Reserve on the Big Island was funded received \$78,750. The Reserve was established in 1983 to protect 25,550 acres of land from near sea level to more than 5,000 feet in elevation. It is the largest Reserve in the State and includes 18 different natural communities. The small, 1-acre parcel is privately owned and currently for sale on the open market. It is the only privately owned parcel in the entire ahupua'a, and existing zoning could permit future development of the property. Surrounding lands – and perhaps the parcel itself – provide habitat for the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat and three endangered plant species.

By law, the state or territory must have a current cooperative agreement with the Service and contribute 25% of the estimated program costs of approved projects, or 10% when two or more states or territories undertake a joint project. The grants are expected to be awarded in summer 2006.

For more information about these grants and grant application requirements contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Consultation, Habitat Conservation Planning, Recovery and State Grants, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 420, Arlington, VA 22203, 703-358-2106. Information also can be accessed at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/>.

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is identified in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance as number 15.615.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million- acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American Tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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For more information about the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>